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ABSTRACT

While the research is clear that family involvement fosters student achievement, it does not clearly describe what family involvement looks like in practice. The authors of this booklet interviewed parents and other family members, teachers, and administrators at four elementary schools and two secondary schools in Oregon and Montana that are known for their strong family-involvement practices. They were asked about what was done to support their children's education, what expectations they had of the children, how family involvement was developed and implemented, and what the most successful strategies were for developing family-school partnerships, among other questions. Two schools are on Indian reservations, and four serve large numbers of Hispanic and other minority students. All schools serve high-poverty populations. The interviews revealed that involvement strategies fell into three themes: using curriculum that makes connections between students' lives and their families and communities; giving families tools to support their children, such as teaching them strategies for enhancing learning at home, explaining school policies and expectations, and linking with human-services organizations; and building mutual, respectful relationships. A list of resources concludes the booklet. (Contains 13 references.) (RT)

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Building Relationships for Student Success: School-Family-Community Partnerships and Student Achievement in the Northwest.

Diane Dorfman
Amy Fisher

November 2002

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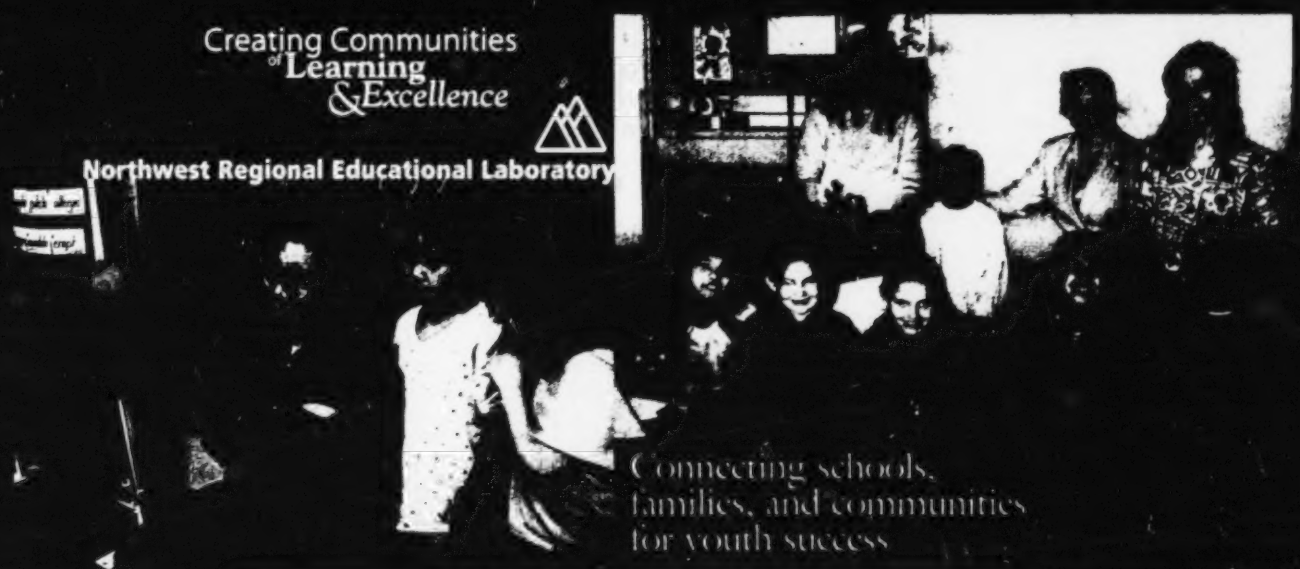

Connecting schools, families, and communities for youth success

building relationships for student success

School–Family–Community Partnerships and Student Achievement in the Northwest

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building relationships for student success

School–Family–Community Partnerships and Student Achievement in the Northwest

November 2002

By Diane Dorfman and Amy Fisher

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Cover photographs of (upper right) Whitman Elementary School in Portland, Oregon, by Steffen Saifer; (upper left) Hogarth Kingeekuk Memorial School in Savoonga, Alaska, by Steffen Saifer; and (bottom) Whitman Elementary School in Portland, Oregon, by Judy Blankenship.

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Introduction

"Family involvement works. When the parents are involved, these kids go to college."
—Hispanic community liaison, Portland, Oregon

This statement from a Hispanic community liaison at an urban high school echoes what educators, parents, and students are increasingly hearing and seeing in their own schools and communities. The anecdotal evidence—the stories that teachers and others share about students who succeed with the involvement of their families—is backed by extensive research showing that partnerships between schools, families, and communities strongly and positively affect student achievement.

While the research is clear, what is *not* always clear is what family involvement that fosters student achievement looks like in practice. To find out, we have tapped the knowledge and experience of educators and parents at a number of Northwest schools that are excelling in this challenging area of school reform. In this booklet, we provide a review of key research and then share what we learned about the creative avenues that elementary, middle, and high schools are taking to promote family involvement.

We asked parents and other family members:

- What do you do to support your child's education?
- What expectations do you have for your child or children? How do you help them meet those expectations?
- In what kinds of family involvement activities does the school invite you to participate? Have you ever organized or initiated any activities? Why?
- Why do you participate in family involvement activities?
- What difficulties have you had supporting your children's learning? How has the school helped you to overcome those difficulties to better support learning?

We asked teachers and administrators:

- How do you develop and implement family involvement or family involvement activities? Why do you do these activities?
- What expectations do you have about the role of families in their children's education?
- How do you adapt your goals for family involvement, both in terms of interest or level of involvement and in terms of culturally diverse perspectives on parents' roles in their child's education?
- What strategies have you found to be most successful in partnering with families?
- What sustains and supports you in this work?

We interviewed teachers, parents, and staff at six schools in Oregon and Montana: four elementary schools and two secondary schools. In choosing schools that had come to our attention for their strong family involvement practices, we recognized that our sample was neither exhaustive of all promising practices nor representative of all kinds of schools. Rather, we focused mainly on schools with large minority populations: Two of the schools are on Indian reservations; four serve large numbers of Hispanic and other minority students. All serve high-poverty communities.

Our interviews revealed a variety of strategies used by schools that can be grouped into three themes:

- Using curriculum that makes connections between students' lives and their families and communities
- Giving families tools to support their children (such as teaching them strategies for enhancing learning at home, explaining school policies and expectations, and linking with human services organizations)
- Building mutual, respectful relationships

Together, these voices of committed educators and families help deepen our understanding of family involvement practices, teaching us much about their diversity and creativity. They tell us how various kinds of schools and families work to build partnerships in ways that increase student achievement.

What Research Says About Family Involvement

We found an enormous body of qualitative and quantitative studies on the impact of family involvement on student achievement. Much of this work, including the most recent studies, has been synthesized in a new report by Anne Henderson and Karen Mapp titled *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement* (2002). The book explores the efficacy of special programs and efforts; key elements in schools' efforts to successfully engage families; and the impact of parent and community organizing on school improvement.

Because the researchers capture the range and depth of evidence supporting effective family involvement, their work serves as a practical reference guide for educators, parents, and community members. As background to our sampler of successful partnerships, we offer highlights from a few of the key studies, a brief summary of Henderson and Mapp's conclusions, and a list of their recommendations.

Defining Family Involvement

Henderson and Mapp present definitions of "parent involvement" and "student achievement" from several studies. While the terminology and degree of detail differ somewhat, the definitions tend to share certain common elements. Researchers typically agree that family involvement minimally includes parental engagement in learning activities at home, supervision of schoolwork, and initiating interaction with teachers.

A definition of student achievement was easier to pin down, according to the authors. "The studies were fairly uniform in how they defined and measured student academic achievement," they report. For young children, the most common measures are teacher ratings of school adjustment, vocabulary, reading and language skills, and social and motor skills. For school-aged children, common measures are report cards, GPAs, standardized tests, and enrollment in advanced courses. Other measures include attendance, graduation, and grade-level promotion (pp. 22–23).

Key Studies

In its wide-ranging review of the research, the report groups the 51 studies it examines under the following topic headings:

- Evaluations of programs and interventions
- Family activities at home and at school
- Home–school interactions
- Family processes and time use
- Community effects
- Culture and class
- Community organizing and constituency building
- Literature reviews

We highlight several of the studies here as a way of illuminating some important issues explored in the literature.

Studies looking at the relationship between the participation of families in their children's education, school programs of welcoming and/or partnering with families, and students' academic success typically divide types of family involvement activities into the following four components:

- Parental academic aspirations and expectations for children
- Participation in school activities and programs
- Home structure that supports learning
- Communication with children about school

(Singh, et al., 1995)

Finding that there are many different types of activities that come under the heading of family involvement, some researchers are exploring whether particular activities are more successful than others. A related and equally important question is whether particular activities are more common or more successful with particular social groups.

Current research suggests that a home structure that supports learning is more strongly correlated with student achievement than family involvement in school-based activities. Fan and Chen (2001), for example, argue that home-based parental involvement is more effective than school-based involvement. Cotton and Wikelund (1989, p. 3) found that

> **there are strong indications that the most effective forms of parent involvement are those which engage parents in working directly with their children on learning activities in the home. Programs that involve parents in reading with their children, supporting their work on homework assignments, or tutoring them using materials and instructions provided by teachers, show particularly impressive results.**

Singh and colleagues (1995) compare the degree of influence and weight of impact of the four components listed above on student achievement. They report that "the strongest influence on achievement was that of previous achievement." They also found that among the four components, "the strongest effect was that of parental aspirations on achievement" (p. 308). They identify a "spiral effect" on parental expectations—parents whose children have had high achievement in the past tend to have higher aspirations for them. The researchers argue that their finding "underscores the importance of early involvement" (p. 309). They also found, however, that parents who have strong and vocal academic aspirations for their children do not necessarily have a more structured home environment or participate more in school activities than parents with lower aspirations. However, parents with high aspirations do typically have more communication with the school (p. 309).

Socioeconomic differences among students and families form the basis of much of the discussion in the literature. Researchers look at the effects of income level on parental involvement and student achievement. Yap and Enoki (1995, pp. 50–51) found that:

> **There is a tendency for school administrators and teachers to undervalue parental involvement, particularly involvement from working-class or nontraditional families. Teachers may have different expectations of parents based on class or cultural differences. For example, they often see single parents as less responsible for their child's education, when these parents actually spend more time with their child on learning activities at home than married parents (Epstein, 1985). Some teachers believe that low-income parents will not or cannot participate in the child's schoolwork, or that their participation will not be beneficial (Epstein, 1983). There is in fact evidence that teachers tend to initiate contact with upper middle-class parents more often (than lower middle-class parents) and for a wider variety of reasons (Mager, 1980).**

Many current research findings and practices indicate that assumptions about poor and minority parents' noninvolvement are largely unfounded. Singh and colleagues (1995) found that parents of higher socioeconomic status (SES) have high aspirations for their children, but they have also found that "ethnic groups typically considered disadvantaged (i.e., Black, Hispanic, and Native American) report higher aspirations ... than those from so-called 'advantaged' ethnic groups" (p. 309). Thorkildsen and Stein (1998) found that parents' involvement is more strongly related to student achievement than parents' income level.

Many current research findings and practices indicate that assumptions about poor and minority parents' noninvolvement are largely unfounded.

On its Web site, the San Diego Office of Education has posted a page titled "Parent Involvement and Student Achievement" (www.sdcoe.k12.ca.us/notes/51/parstu.html). This research synthesis argues that the most "accurate predictor of a student's achievement in school is not income or social status, but the extent to which the student's family is able to:

1. Create a home environment that encourages learning
2. Express high (but not unrealistic) expectations for their children's achievement and future careers
3. Become involved in their children's education at the school and in the community."

Another area of research looks at the relationships between age or grade level and the efficacy or vigor of family involvement and school–community partnerships. Typically, parents spend more time in their children's classrooms in the early grades and less through middle and high school. Parents, teachers, and students argue that older children do not want their parents at their school. However, some studies looking at middle school students specifically (Keith, et al., 1992; Singh, et al., 1995) find that parental involvement has a positive effect on the amount of homework eighth-graders do; more completed homework assignments translate into more engaged students in the classroom.

Singh and colleagues (1995) believe that two of the types of family involvement, in particular—home structure and parental participation in activities—are more subject to a student's age. They find that the effectiveness of parents' efforts to structure the home environment, including limiting television, monitoring homework, and expecting maintenance of a certain GPA are likely affected by students' ages and by the relevance of their schoolwork to their lives. Similarly, as mentioned above, parents' activities in the schools may have more of an impact on very young children than on older children. The researchers also argue that for middle school students, a specific type of parental involvement is most appropriate: "nurturing the educational aspirations and parental support for autonomy may be key components of parental involvement" (p. 310).

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Summary of Findings

Henderson and Mapp conclude:

> **Taken as a whole, these studies found a positive and convincing relationship between family involvement and benefits for students, including improved academic achievement. This relationship holds across families of all economic, racial/ethnic, and educational backgrounds and for students of all ages. Although there is less research on the effects of community involvement, it also suggests benefits for schools, families and students, including improved achievement and behavior (p. 24).**

Drawing upon the evidence on effective strategies, Henderson and Mapp offer the following recommendations (which they elaborate fully in their report):

1. Recognize that all parents, regardless of income, education level, or cultural background, are involved in their children's learning and want their children to do well in school.
2. Create programs that will support families to guide their children's learning, from preschool through high school.
3. Work with families to build their social and political connections.
4. Develop the capacity of school staff to work with families and community members.
5. Link family and community engagement efforts to student learning.
6. Focus efforts to engage families and community members on developing trusting and respectful relationships.
7. Embrace a philosophy of partnership and be willing to share power with families. Make sure parents, school staff, and community members understand that the responsibility for children's educational development is a collaborative enterprise.
8. Build strong connections between schools and community organizations.
9. Design and conduct research that is more rigorous and focused, and that uses more culturally sensitive and empowering definitions of family involvement.

Lingering Questions

Henderson and Mapp conclude that the "evidence is consistent, positive, and convincing: families have a major influence on their children's achievement." The cumulative weight of the findings, drawn from a growing body of research, "build an ever-strengthening case (that) when schools, families, and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more" (p. 7).

Still, in the quest to learn how family involvement affects student achievement, important questions linger. One important question that researchers are continuing to explore is how we measure the impact of family involvement on student achievement. Fan and Chen (2001) argue that some types of school-based assessments may be better than others in measuring either the effects of parental involvement on student achievement, or the effects of specific types of parental involvement on specific types of student achievement. As ever, well-designed studies are needed to unravel this question, as are well-aligned student assessments.

Finally, a major finding that parental aspirations and other home-based forms of support have a great influence on student achievement raises another important question because many schools are not yet engaging in effective partnership activities. How can we know home-based practices really are more effective until the majority of schools consistently and pervasively implement the most effective school-based strategies?

Voices of Experience

The convincing literature on the effects of family involvement on student achievement complements a vast body of resources on how to create school–family–community partnerships.

Numerous texts, Web sites, and workshops offer information and training to teachers, administrators, and families in the art and science of supporting children's education across all aspects of their lives (see Resources section on Page 26 for examples).

What is often heard from teachers or parents consulting these resources is the lament: "That will never work in *my* school." It is true that each school is different, and sometimes only a unique confluence of events, personalities, and resources can achieve an effective program. Yet, we have looked at schools that do not benefit from any extraordinary circumstances. They serve all kinds of student populations in all kinds of settings—high minority and low minority, high poverty and middle class, rural and urban. Their teachers, principals, and families tell us not only what is feasible in busy, overextended lives, but also what is actually happening every day. They talk about how they support education in various ways, both creative and ordinary—ways that families and schools anywhere can adapt.

The six Northwest schools and districts we feature here are (in order of discussion):

- Whitman Elementary School, Portland, Oregon
- Atkinson Elementary School, Portland, Oregon
- Cherry Valley Elementary School, Polson, Montana
- Whitaker Middle School, Portland, Oregon
- Roosevelt High School, Portland, Oregon
- The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs and Jefferson County School District, Central Oregon

A Curriculum That Includes Families

School: Whitman Elementary School

Setting: Urban

Size: 453 students

Student Mix: 23 percent bilingual/English language learners

In an English as a second language (ESL) class at Whitman, the teacher draws parents into the classroom and creates ways for them to do schoolwork with their children at home. ESL teacher Lilia Doni and her colleague, Larisa Stolyer, have created a variety of projects that reach out to the Russian, Ukrainian, Vietnamese, Hispanic, and Chinese immigrant families that live in this rapidly changing urban community. The projects are designed to embrace cultural diversity and foster inclusiveness in the school. A project on fairy tales, a universal story genre, offers opportunities for learning literacy skills, as well as geography, speech, and world cultures. For the project, the children ask their parents to tell them a folk story, fairy tale, or myth from their native country. The parents write down the story in their native language, and then the child writes an English version of the tale. They also work together to create an oversized paper doll representing the story's main character, complete with native dress. The students then bring their stories and dolls to school to share with the class. The project includes illustrations of the stories, discussion about language and culture, and an in-class presentation of the stories by parents themselves.

Bringing families into classrooms has a profound effect on students, educators say. Children see their parents in the role of educator or leader, and this pride also translates into greater confidence and engagement in their schoolwork (see Sidebar on Page 11).

The fairy tale project is one of a number of activities in Whitman's ESL program that involve parents in their children's learning. For example, Doni sends home packets each week with books, with instructions in the families' native languages on how to use the books to support their children's reading. The instructions avoid the issue of whether the parents are literate in English by providing questions they can ask their child reader—for example, questions about the story or characters—that don't depend on having read the text themselves. The goal is to strengthen their child's literacy skills as well as reinforce the value of reading.

Doni acknowledges that coordinating the parent presentations for the fairy tale project is time-consuming. There's also a great deal to be done preparing the packets each week. While the effort to phone families, often several times, and remind children to ask their parents about stories is labor intensive, the teacher finds that the benefits far outweigh the effort.

So why work so hard to get parents involved? "They do your work," she said, laughing.

> **If you have the parents involved, you've already done half of your job, because then the children are learning and working at home. If the parent knows what to do and the parent is involved in school, then he's supporting the teacher at home. That's half of your job. If the child reads in school for 30 minutes and then she goes home and reads for another 30 minutes, then you've basically doubled your time.**

In the end, parents who spend time with their children reading or talking about reading, telling them stories and listening to their stories, build their children's literacy skills in ways unachievable in the classroom alone. Children make greater progress with less effort in their daily lessons because their parents sustain learning beyond school hours.

Here are a few more examples of some of the exercises Doni's students do with their families:

- For a lesson on trees, Doni sends the following note home, in several languages:
  "This week we are studying the tree parts. Please go with your child to look at the tree he/she chose to 'adopt.' Looking at the bark and leaves, help your child to notice the shape of the bark and leaves or rub them with colored crayons as we did in class. If you can, find out what the tree is called and write it down in English or in your native language. Your child has to bring to school several leaves from his/her tree (preferably dried)."
- Each week, the children write a letter to their families:
  Dear Mom and Dad (or other appropriate guardian),
  This week we learned about _____.
  I learned that _____.
  Another interesting thing I learned was _____.
  However, I still have one question _____?
  Love,
  (Child's name)

The twin tasks of bringing students' cultures into the classroom and education into the home are inseparable. Both tasks require understanding of and sensitivity to the varying perceptions immigrant families may have of school and education. Parents of English language learners (ELL students) arrive in this country with widely divergent views on what occurs in schools and what role parents have in their children's education. Doni wants all parents to understand exactly what goes on in their child's classroom. She believes they are entitled to that knowledge, and that such knowledge carries with it responsibility. They are asked to know what their child is learning so that they may participate in that learning in any way possible. Doni explains:

> **They're not familiar with all the fund raising and other different events that American parents usually hold during the year, so they cannot help with that. So it gets really hard to make parents come to school. But on the other side, they're very supportive of their children's learning. They're very interested in getting their children a very good education. And again, it's totally different because we have different parents that come from different social groups. They value education and they want their children to learn and they support and encourage their children if they know how to. They're willing to help at home.**

Parents' Perspective. The parents of three students in the ESL classroom confirm that, as the Whitman teacher asserts, they are actively and passionately supportive of their children's education.

One father, a Vietnamese immigrant with a daughter in the ESL reading group, was asked how he supports his children's education: "Every way they need it. Their mother teaches them how to do their homework. We bring them outside for learning (some swimming, sports …)," he said. He told us he encouraged his daughters to do well in school and in life. He focused on what he could do at home to support their schoolwork and to relate his aspirations for them. For this parent, who has limited English and a busy work schedule, family involvement does not necessarily mean active participation in school-based events. He sees his support complementing what the school can do. He reported that a meeting with his daughter's teacher had been "fine" and that the school "is doing fine." He elaborates: "School can't do too much for your child. You have to help them a little bit—help the school keep track of children, help them do homework." For him the school is the place his children go and learn as much as they can. It is not where he is able to spend his time because of his work schedule. Therefore, he contributes to his daughters' education with support at home.

"A lot of children need the parents to participate, and if I participate maybe the other parents will participate."

Another parent also strongly believes in the importance of parent support for children at home. She reads with her daughter, helps her with homework, talks to her about what she could be when she grows up. But this woman, whose first language is Spanish, sees a greater role for her support at the school as well. She explains:

> **If all parents just give 10 or 20 minutes, I know we can do our best. I stopped [at school] every day when I had the time. If we cooperate and work together we can do a lot of good things for the school. I would like to do the best because my daughter is there and not only my daughter. A lot of children need the parents to participate, and if I participate maybe the other parents will participate.**

At PTA meetings, she offers suggestions about how to bring parents into the school to read, run a small school-supply store, or help classroom teachers. She realizes that work prevents many parents from coming to the school during the day. She works part-time and has two days a week to help teachers with projects in the classroom. The school supports her efforts, she explains, by helping her to understand "what is good and not good for my daughter. They tell the parents what to do for the children, and they explain it very well." Another important reason she likes to work at the school is her daughter's reaction. "She's really happy (when she sees me in the class). She likes it. She wishes I could go every day."

A third parent, a Ukrainian immigrant, told us he has also learned many new ways to support his son's education. He reiterated the importance of spending time "together … reading children's books. We are going out, taking trips in nature, taking him to sport activities." He encourages his son to aspire to college and realize there are many options to choose from in life. He explained that he has come to learn though his involvement with the school how important communication is between his family and his son's teachers. He says:

> **When the parents are involved in school's activities, [they are] coming and talking to the teachers, then the child feels a bigger responsibility toward his parents. It is a mutual process, because the parent feels a bigger responsibility for his child as well as he has a better control over his child. When communicating with the child and the teachers, the parents can solve any problems, or at least most of the problems. We receive a lot of translated information from the school which is very important to us because we learn what is happening at school …. We … learn a lot about the curriculum.**

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Fairy Tales, Folk Tales, and Family Stories

Amy Le and her mother are taking turns reading to the class "A Bunch of Chopsticks" from their homemade books. Mrs. Le reads a few lines in Vietnamese and then Amy, a precocious first-grader, reads in English. Behind them are maps and hand-written posters listing titles of stories, main characters, plots, and more—all in various languages. The rest of the English-as-a-second-language (ESL) students are lying on their stomachs taking "notes" on clipboards. They sketch quick drawings or jot down some words in the six boxes on their papers, listening hard to follow the storyline. The story concludes with a moral lesson about the importance of the family sticking together like a "bunch of chopsticks," because separately they are not as strong. It is a familiar story that Mrs. Le heard when she was a little girl in Vietnam. Amy's father is nearby, beaming with pride and keeping a wary eye on Amy's two little sisters.

Almost every day for more than two weeks, different families repeat the activity. During this time, the children hear parents' favorite childhood stories from Russia, Ukraine, Mexico, and the Philippines.

Lilia Doni, an ESL teacher, developed this as a culminating unit for the year. In addition to sharing the stories themselves, Doni incorporated short lessons in geography as parents and children showed the location of their countries of origin and told a bit about the climate and terrain. Each family taught the class how to say "hello" in their language and then, after the story, how to say "thank you." These terms were written on chart paper and kept posted. During the weeks of the unit, Doni and the children read many other folk and fairy tales, including several versions of the same story as told in different cultures. They discussed the elements of fairy and folk tales that make them a unique form of literature. New vocabulary words were listed and discussed.

On the last Friday of the school year, all the parents and siblings were invited to come to school, and the children performed a readers' theater version of one of the stories. All the homemade books were displayed as well as some of the notes. The charts were all complete and posted, and the room decorated. Each child showed and talked about his or her "heritage doll"—a paper doll clothed by the parents in traditional dress from their countries of origin. A few visiting "dignitaries" came: the principal and an ESL coordinator from the district. Doni concluded with a short speech thanking the parents for teaching all the children so much and for helping to show that speaking more than one language is not a problem but a strength. Refreshments were served, and there was much celebration and appreciation for the hard work and commitment of parents. Doni gave each family a small photo album book with one or two photos from the project and plenty of blank pages for future pictures from school. A great sense of pride from both parents and children was palpable.

Source: Edwards, K., Ellis, D., Fisher, A., Ko, L., & Saifer, S. (in press). *Classroom to community and back: Using culturally responsive standards-based (CRSB) teaching to strengthen family and community partnerships and increase student achievement.* Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

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Building Relationships

School: Atkinson Elementary School

Setting: Urban

Size: 566 students

Student Mix: 41 percent English language learners

Atkinson Elementary School in Portland draws children of Chinese, Russian, Ukrainian, Vietnamese, and Hispanic descent, along with children from across the city, who compete for space in the school's nationally recognized language programs. A diverse group of students attend the two-way Spanish immersion program and Spanish- and Chinese-as-a-second-language programs. Nearly half are English language learners, and more than half are on free and reduced-price lunch.

Atkinson purposefully ties family involvement to relationship building through recognizing and honoring the many cultures represented by the students and their families. Colorful banners in Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, Russian, and English greet families as they enter the building and invite them to join the school community. The many bilingual staff members and volunteers at the school speak and listen to all family members. All materials sent home are translated into the children's native language, and interpreters attend all school events.

"The families say they know the principal wants us here. They say that attending this school means not having to become someone else."

Languages, however, are just the beginning: Greeters posted around the building welcome students and families each morning and afternoon. As students arrive, festive music plays. A lending library has been set up in the cafeteria where families can check out books to take home. Families are invited into the school to volunteer, read to children in the halls, or tutor one-to-one. As Priscilla Smith, the family involvement coordinator, explains, "It's powerful for the students to see their parents in class, and powerful for the parents to be able to help."

In whatever way families wish to have a presence in the school, the school welcomes it. "The families say they know the principal wants us here," says Principal Deborah Peterson, explaining that the goal is to put parents in the driver's seat of their child's education. "They say that attending this school means not having to become someone else. They feel validated."

Activities at the annual Welcome Back Night are designed so that "parents can be the expert for their child, rather than the child showing the parents what everything means or how school works," Peterson says. To this end, the activities invite people to do native crafts from Mexico, Russia, and Vietnam; prepare or enjoy international foods; dance and listen to folk music. Even breakfast has become a way of inviting families to come into the building and be part of the school.

Not all parents are able to participate in school activities because of heavy or irregular work schedules. Peterson explained that many of the Chinese-speaking families are unable to participate in midday or evening events. Yet, many Chinese families join their children at school for breakfast (see Sidebar on Page 13).

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The work of relationship-building does not end, however, when families feel comfortable in the school. Family involvement coordinator Priscilla Smith explains that staff members continue to reach out to families to learn whether their needs are being met and, if not, what kinds of help they require. "When the teacher helps them, they develop a closer relationship," Smith says. "The teacher can ask them to volunteer, and parents start asking about what to do at home, ways to talk to their children. There's a pyramid effect. By reaching one parent, they will bring in other parents."

There is a strong effort to ensure that the partnership is mutual. School staff members listen to parents in all their languages, provide help on a variety of issues, and formally invite suggestions. Last year, the school organized focus groups to learn what parents would like from the school. In response to the parent input, the school held learning fairs to help parents better understand how to help their children meet benchmarks. The school staff explained to parents what the curriculum and benchmark exams cover, how the school prepares students for the exams, and what specific subjects are most critical.

Always, the Atkinson parents are invited to share their wisdom and stories and to support their children's learning at home. In this way, families complement high academic expectations by nurturing emotional growth and development. With support and encouragement from the school, Atkinson parents are helping their children grow strong, safe, self-assured, and healthy.

Atkinson Breakfast Program

At Atkinson Elementary School, the school breakfast program has evolved into an opportunity to make parents feel welcome in the school. The staff encourages parents to attend, and many do. In fact, so many parents and children were lining up outside the door early in the morning, that staff extended the time breakfast is served and now start a half-hour before school begins.

Several "greeters," many of whom are bilingual staff or translators, "work the room," meeting and building relationships with families as they maintain a celebratory and welcoming atmosphere. A lending library has been located in the cafeteria so that staff can encourage parents to explore the books and take them home. Staff members comment that families who previously had no books at home are now building home libraries.

The breakfast program has been a particularly effective way to meet and talk with Chinese-speaking parents, many of whom cannot attend other school activities because of long work days. The breakfasts cost 75 cents to families not on free and reduced-price lunch. Parents talk and laugh while their children eat and play.

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Building Shared Community

School: Cherry Valley Elementary School

Setting: Rural (Indian reservation)

Size: 284 students

Student Mix: 40 percent Native American

Located on the Flathead Indian Reservation in Polson, Cherry Valley Elementary School serves an economically challenged and culturally diverse student population. The staff has worked hard to partner with families, nearly 40 percent of whom are Native American. Informal, participatory activities at school have helped teachers and parents build working relationships. An emphasis on viewing the child holistically, within the context of the family and community, has led to the development of a culturally responsive school and an extensive family support program.

The parents and guardians we interviewed stated that they felt the school was very "open" and education was "individualized to each child." Parents report that teachers were "responsive" and willing to discuss and address any questions or concerns that parents voiced. One Native American parent says:

> **It's so open over there. If you have a problem with your child or even with the teacher, you can go in and talk to Elaine [the principal] or the teachers and get things settled any way you need to. And you're more than welcome into the classrooms. If you want to come in and read a story or help the kids out on a science project, it's really open, you can pretty much do what you need to do to help your child.**

How do teachers at Cherry Valley go about making parents feel so comfortable? Title I teacher Debbie Hogenson says that it all starts in the classroom, by building relationships with students:

> **I get close to the child and develop a good relationship with him or her. The child will usually begin to talk about school and the teacher at home as they become excited about their learning, and the excitement starts to rub off on the parent. This makes it easier for parents to open up lines of communication with the teacher and gives them a sense of belonging when they come into the school. In this way, casual conversations and informal contacts can develop into authentic parent–teacher relationships based on what's best for their child.**

The first quarter at Cherry Valley is especially geared around building relationships with families. Events such as the annual open house, ice cream socials, and family fun nights are planned to acquaint parents and teachers in a nonthreatening environment. The goal is to help parents feel a part of the school.

Building these relationships early on is important because it paves the way for meaningful partnerships between families and teachers—partnerships that include communication and joint problem solving around each student's school success. Hogenson finds that when parents feel a sense of belonging, a foundation is built upon which any issues or problems can be addressed. Teachers and family members are able to better understand each other's perspectives. Hogenson comments:

When the family is recognized and feels comfortable in the school, there's a connection that is built between the family and the school. This connection alleviates misunderstandings that may develop when concerns arise about their child's performance or behavior. There is a mutual feeling that you're both working for the same goal. Problem solving and brainstorming take place as a partnership, rather than a teacher-imposed decision.

Hogenson further explains that when parents feel that sense of belonging, the teacher is no longer seen as an "external influence," but as someone who is listening to parents and wants their child to be successful. Parents have a better understanding of the school's objectives and activities, and "they've already bought into whatever needs to be communicated."

When relationships are built at the beginning of the school year, conferences are no longer the first time parents and teachers meet. Hogenson notes that this is especially important because "the conferences are a time to talk about how the child is progressing in the school setting. If there are issues and concerns, and the parent and teacher do not have a relationship, the parent may only hear the negative and begin to feel resistant." If parent–teacher conferences do turn out to be the first time parents and teachers meet, "it is much harder to set the tone that the main goal is to work together, addressing the child's specific needs while coming from a strengths-based viewpoint."

"There is a mutual feeling that you're both working for the same goal. Problem solving and brainstorming take place as a partnership, rather than a teacher-imposed decision."

Positive working relationships cannot be built without recognizing the influences of culture. Supporting families means reducing cultural discontinuities and building on the strengths of all children. Teachers at Cherry Valley learn about cultural differences in interpersonal communication styles so they are able to respectfully and effectively communicate with parents. To create a truly expanded learning community, the school invites members of other helping agencies, including Salish and Kootenai tribal members, as culture and language teachers to work along with educators and families. When a visitor walks into Cherry Valley School, she sees a permanent teepee in the lobby adorned with Kootenai words and symbols. Photographs of local chiefs of the Salish and Kootenai tribes are on the school walls. Culturally relevant family fun nights at the school and an annual "Celebration of Families" powwow are sponsored each year. "The message," says Principal Elaine Meeks, "is that this school belongs to every child and family."

The Native American family fun night is an example of how, at Cherry Valley, parents are not solely asked to support the school's wishes or needs, but are supported in developing their own goals and initiating their own ideas. A parent conceived the idea of a Native American family fun night as a way to involve more Native students and to allow them to share their culture with the rest of the community:

I wanted to get the Indian students at Cherry Valley more involved in the school. I thought the only way we could do this was to bring awareness of what these Native American kids do. A lot of them are involved in their culture through the powwows or their language, and I wanted students to become aware of that.

The result was an evening attended by 100 children and family members, both Native and non-Native, where everyone had an opportunity to make Native arts and crafts and play Native games.

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Teachers at Cherry Valley recognize that not all activities at the school are going to appeal to culturally diverse families. They make sure that a variety of activities are available that are comfortable for families, and avoid judging families who do not show up for a particular activity. Hogenson explains:

> **It's about accepting each family for who they are, including their beliefs and their level of social comfort. We wouldn't assume or expect all the non-Indian families to go to cultural events such as powwows. So we shouldn't assume or expect that all culturally diverse families feel comfortable attending the events that mainstream culture views as fun and exciting. It's about not judging families for what they choose or choose not to attend. It doesn't necessarily mean they aren't engaged with the school community. The key is to provide multiple and diverse opportunities for each family's participation.**

Celebrating the lives of family and community members takes many forms and occurs often. Activities often integrate literacy and other academic areas. Oral history projects involve students in researching, interviewing, and writing about family and community members. These projects are usually displayed at the school or in the community—such as at local doctors' offices.

Recognizing that some students still had unmet needs that were affecting their academic and social success, the Polson Partnership Project was developed (see Sidebar on Page 17). One of the primary activities of the project has been to link families to community social services. These services have improved the ability of families to support their children's school success.

Teachers and parents at Cherry Valley say that they can't stress enough the importance of building respectful relationships. Cherry Valley has built relationships with families through its emphasis on respecting the culture of families, welcoming them to the school, responding to their questions and concerns, and supporting them with the help of the Polson Partnership Project. This has fostered a sense of shared community and commitment to children's success.

Creating a Child and Family Support Program: The Polson Partnership Project

The Polson Partnership Project (PPP), a school-based child and family support program, was established in 1993 to "ensure that all children have a positive, successful school experience and to link families with needed services." The program is directed by a working team that includes the principal, classroom teachers, a licensed clinical social worker, a family enrichment coordinator, child and family partners, the school counselor, members of the Native American parent committee and PTA, and the district superintendent.

The mission of the project is to define and create resiliency-based collaborations that build on family strengths, cultivate healthy attributes, and create a caring environment in the school. "The result," says Cherry Valley social worker Co Carew, "is a protective shield that helps ensure school success for all students." Funded by a variety of grants, program components have been added slowly over the years to address the needs of teachers, children, and families. They include:

- Teacher education, consultation, and support
- Cultural enrichment activities incorporated into the regular classroom and curriculum
- Early intervention for at-risk children and their families, including case management; referral and collaboration with community resources; individual and family counseling; and a child and family mentor program
- Parents as Teachers (early learning for children birth through age five)
- After-school program focusing on cultural and creative arts activities
- Demonstration site for the Montana Early Literacy Model, focusing on family literacy and caregivers of children from birth to five years of age
- Involving parents in their children's education and development in a wide variety of ways
- School-based family fun activities
- Families and Schools Together (FAST), a prevention program that focuses on building relationships within the family, across families, and with school and community personnel
- High school-aged role models for elementary and middle school-aged youth
- Little Cherries, early literacy and art activities for toddlers and preschoolers, and Cherry Blossoms, a program for toddlers that focuses on sensory stimulation and socialization
- The Cherry Orchard Family Center, which offers an inviting space for families to engage in interactive learning activities and to meet other families

It is important to note that these components have been added and integrated into the school culture only after careful study and preparation, and are supported by additional funding and faculty. Only when teachers understand the purpose and benefits of innovations can they support them and make them an integral part of their practice. Meeks explains how the Polson Partnership Project is both supported by and supportive of the faculty:

> **We are seeing that commitment to the project and eventual success for students is dependent on strong support from the school personnel. It is critical that the program be fully integrated as part of the school program with the understanding that to provide for human service needs is an important part in ensuring equity in education for all students.**

Source: Novick, R., & Fisher, A. (2002). *Sharing the wisdom of practice: Schools that optimize literacy learning for all students.* Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

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Every Student, Every Family

School: Whitaker Middle School

Setting: Urban

Size: 677 students

Student Mix: 47 percent African American, 19 percent Hispanic

Teacher Sara Vega-Kreuzer, through her experience at two very different Portland schools, has seen how individual attention to families increases students' connection to school and their academic success. Inner-city Whitaker Middle School serves predominantly-African American and Hispanic students; 74 percent receive free or reduced-price lunch, In contrast, only 7 percent of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch at Lincoln High School, located in Portland's affluent West Hills neighborhood.

At both schools, Vega-Kreuzer has discovered that a positive first contact between her, her students, and their families can set the tone for a strong working relationship for the year. A useful tool for developing that relationship, she found, is the Student Interest Inventory (see Sidebar on Page 19).

Vega-Kreuzer noticed that, in contrast to Lincoln, where parents frequently contact teachers, many of the families at Whitaker were not aware of the roles they could take and the rights that they had in their child's education. For example, many Whitaker parents were not aware that they could ask for a tutor for their child. Many did not initiate contact with the school, but instead waited until the school contacted them. So Vega-Kreuzer began working with parents at Whitaker to educate them about the power they have and the role the schools expect parents to take.

"The resources are out there, you just need to bring them into the schools and show the parents what the community is offering and that the school wants to support them as well."

By inviting parents to write or call her, Vega-Kreuzer lets parents know that she recognizes they have something to offer in the education of their child. But she went further still: She invited community human service agencies to the school to provide information on their services and to link up with families. In tapping these wider community resources, Vega-Kreuzer demonstrated the school did not have to "do it all." She explains:

> **I tried to bring all those resources into the school and give support to parents through our school. In general, teachers, administrators and other school staff assume that most parents know all their resources, but we really don't know their needs. A lot of my parents didn't know that there were free English classes at Portland Community College .... The resources are out there, you just need to bring them into the schools and show the parents what the community is offering and that the school wants to support them as well.**

Vega-Kreuzer works to make sure that relationships with families are not one-sided, but rather are mutually supportive. By both seeking families' assistance as well as extending assistance to them, Vega-Kreuzer causes families and students to feel empowered and fully connected to the teacher, to the school, and to their education.

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Establishing Contact With Families

Teacher Sara Vega-Kreuzer has found that using a Student Interest Inventory helps her to get to know her students and communicate with their families. Materials from Canter's (1993) *Succeeding with Difficult Students Workbook* were used by Vega-Kreuzer to develop the inventory. The inventory has three parts: (1) questions about students and their interests; (2) contact information so parents and Vega-Kreuzer can reach each other, and space for parents to write a personal message about their child, if they wish; and (3) a record sheet for Vega-Kreuzer to keep track of how many times she has had contact with parents and why. She explains:

> It has been very helpful because I have some parents that wanted to know specific things about their child. They wrote me back, and I was very encouraged with their responses. I really liked the idea of them writing me because I felt informed. The student inventory lets parents know that I really care about who I'm working with. Parents know that I am available for them, and I have a number to contact them. The relationships are constructed from there. As my grandmother would say, "La puerta está abierta, por favor entre" ("The door is open, please come in").

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High Expectations

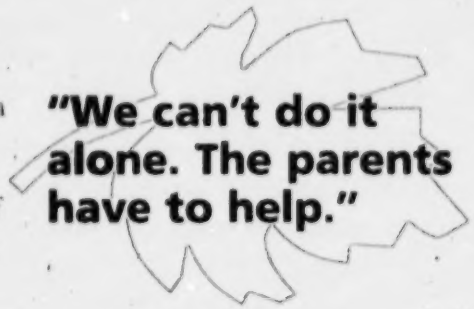
School: Roosevelt High School

Setting: Urban

Size: 1,000 students

Student Mix: 54 percent minority; 20 percent English language learners

A key reason teachers give for implementing family involvement strategies is: "We can't do it alone. The parents have to help." At Portland's Roosevelt High School, it is clear that strong teaching, challenging curriculum, and family involvement are all crucial to students' success. Roosevelt's students are diverse, and some of the poorest in the city: 60 percent of the students receive free or reduced-price lunch. More than half are minority, and almost 200 of the 1,000 students are English language learners. At Roosevelt, strengthening the education of children is bound up tightly with strengthening ties to their families.



All of Roosevelt's parents are offered the chance to partner with the school. A week after the start of school, the Title VII coordinator, Lourdes Love, invites families to attend an evening informational session. A large group of Spanish-speaking families and a smaller group of Hmong families attended the most recent session, where they learned about the school's programs, met teachers, and heard Principal Andy Kelly say that he and his entire staff want every student to go to college. The expectation is that every student will not just graduate, but will earn good grades and go on to higher education. Kelly told the families that he and the counselors are working hard to find financial aid and scholarship opportunities so that tuition will not stand in anyone's way. As part of the presentation, counselors talked about mentoring and college prep programs. ESL teachers, after going over curriculum, emphasized their commitment to serving each student and their pleasure at seeing them each day in class. Teachers echoed the principal and Title VII coordinator's goal of creating a comfortable place for parents at the school and with each other. The fall 2002 event was the first time the school had asked both Hmong and Hispanic families to attend the same welcome-to-school activity, according to Love. After achieving the first goal of getting families comfortable coming to the school, the school aims to make families comfortable with each other. Ultimately, the staff hopes, the various language groups will see themselves as part of the larger school community. To help move things in this direction, a school–community garden invites families to grow vegetables throughout the spring and summer. And a sewing circle brings together Hmong, Spanish, and Russian speakers for community and relationship building.

At the fall event were other indications of how closely curriculum and family involvement are bound. The alternative education teacher explained that students who fail classes can retake them in an alternative setting with fewer students and much more personal attention. The community liaison, Maria Elena Gomez, noted that for many Hispanic students, the greatest difficulty with school is not the curriculum, but the impersonality of large classes and teachers too busy with too many students to take time with each of them. When these students feel disconnected to a class, their attendance tends to drop. In the smaller, more personal alternative classes, attendance typically improves and grades go up.

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Bridging the Cultural and Geographic Divide

School–Community: The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs and Jefferson County School District

Setting: Rural (Indian reservation) and small town (Madras)

Size: 3,197 students in the district

Student Mix: 40 percent Native American, 40 percent Hispanic, 20 percent Anglo

Many children who grow up on the Warm Springs Reservation in Central Oregon attend Warm Springs Elementary School. But when they reach middle and high school, they ride a bus off the reservation to the town of Madras, 20 miles away. It's a long trip across geographic and cultural boundaries. Many of the teachers in the Jefferson County School District—as many as 20 new ones every year—know little about the region or its Native people.

Tribal educator Julie Quaid works with families in this mostly low-income district to help build relationships and gather resources. She is also a parent. In that role, she seeks open communication with the school and offers unwavering support to her daughters. This parent and educator is involved in a broad range of practices, personally and professionally, that both reflect and forge the relationship between the district and the community. She and other tribal educators are working to enhance Native students' success in school.

As Director of Essential Education for the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Quaid manages a wide range of committees—everything from Early Head Start and tribal preschool to the public library and higher education. In an effort to consolidate resources and strengthen collaboration, she has organized regular monthly meetings among all the local Indian education committees. She meets with representatives from Title VII, Tribal Education, and Johnson O'Malley supplemental educational programs for Native American students to "pull people together and have them think about it as a bigger picture." She reports that "the results have been strong." All sorts of fertile ideas have arisen from all the committees, she says, adding, "I facilitate discussions that can get pretty personal and encourage them to work together rather than in isolation."

The collaboration, however, is not limited to these three tribal educational agencies. The committees have included the school district in all key discussions. "We get good feedback from the school. We have weekly administrative council meetings: all district principals, the superintendent, assistant superintendent, support staff, and me as tribal representative. We talk about big issues in schools. There is a good trusting relationship with these people."

In addition to helping to keep these committees from working in isolation, Quaid is hoping to consolidate scarce resources. "Especially with the reduction in resources that every one of those committees has had, we coordinate so we are not duplicating efforts," she says.

This parent and educator is involved in a broad range of practices, personally and professionally, that both reflect and forge the relationship between the district and the community. She and other tribal educators are working to enhance Native students' success in school.

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One goal of the monthly meetings was to ask the community what they want. Families wanted more information about school practices and educational processes. So the district and tribal education committees held an "education summit" at the Warm Springs resort of Kah-Nee-Ta. Seminar topics included graduation requirements for seniors and school site councils (see Sidebar below). This year, further district budget cuts made such a summit impossible; instead, the district is holding informational sessions at the school throughout the year.

Other activities, too, further Quaid's work of building relationships between the school and community. Each year, she invites the middle and high school teachers from Madras to Warm Springs for a back-to-school barbecue. The vast majority of teachers are non-Native, and few have backgrounds in working with Native American children and families. Also, from sixth grade on, Warm Springs students and their families have to go to Madras for many school-related events. The teachers' distance from Warm Springs can be interpreted by some Warm Springs residents as a lack of interest in their community. The barbecue gives teachers a chance to get to know the Warm Springs community in a relaxed, informal setting. Warm Springs residents appreciate the visit from middle and high school teachers.

The Warm Springs Education Summit

In October 2001, the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs hosted the Warm Springs Education Summit. The summit's stated goal was "to provide Warm Springs parents with current and accurate information about the school district and emphasize the importance of parental involvement and support."

Following breakfast and welcoming, concurrent sessions invited participants to learn about the following topics:

- State report cards
- Student leadership
- Graduation requirements
- CIM/CAM
- Search Institute's 40 Assets
- Sports program
- Jefferson County Middle School Accelerated Schools programs
- District resource officer
- Special education
- Student achievement and attendance
- Alternative education programs
- School busing
- School policies

Over lunch, Quaid spoke about enhancement programs: supplemental programs to enhance education at the district. These programs include a Title VII cultural summer camp, an OSU summer camp, the Science and Math Integrated Experience (SMILE) Program, and after-school tutoring. In the afternoon, there were two general sessions: a parent panel discussion on getting involved in school district committees, and a presentation by an Indian education specialist on parents and schools working together.

Recipients received a notebook brimming with resources and further information on each of the session topics. It also included the parent–student handbook from Warm Springs Elementary School.

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Conclusion

What have these schools learned about the link between school–family–community partnerships and student achievement? Though it is difficult to determine whether the improved outcomes can be attributed solely or mainly to family involvement practices, these schools have indeed seen impressive gains since implementing their family involvement strategies.

At Cherry Valley, ongoing evaluation of the Polson Partnership Project has shown improvement in:

- Student achievement
- Student attendance
- Student behavior
- Family involvement in their children's education
- Jobs held by parents
- Knowledge of drug, alcohol, and violence prevention
- Parenting skills
- Family literacy
- Medical, nutritional, physical, and mental health services for children

Although Cherry Valley has not completely closed the achievement gap between its Native American and white children, it has made and continues to make substantial progress in reducing this gap, with 82 percent of Native students versus 89 percent of all students meeting the third-grade reading benchmark, as measured by Running Record assessments. In 2001, 65 percent of Native American students, compared with 73 percent of all students, were performing at the proficient or advanced levels on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, administered to all students in the fourth grade.

In the spring of 2002, three of Doni's 12 first-grade ELL students at Whitman Elementary made two years of progress in reading. They started the school year just below grade level and ended the year nearly two years above, as measured by districtwide testing. This is a remarkable achievement, particularly among students whose parents speak little or no English in their homes. All children in the class made adequate progress.

Atkinson Elementary has seen dramatic increases in test scores. Over the past two years, the number of ELL students who did not meet benchmarks has dropped from 53 percent to 12 percent. Principal Deborah Peterson admits that she cannot link this success definitively to the family involvement programs or literacy blocks in the schedule. "But," she observes with a smile, "since these programs have started, our scores are going up."

When we review the experiences of these teachers and families, a number of common strategies emerge:

- **Parents are offered information and strategies for supporting students' education at home.** At Whitman Elementary, teacher Lilia Doni found that this can be done while parents volunteer in class. Instructions for activities to do at home are frequently sent home by Doni and teachers at Cherry Valley. At Atkinson, the school breakfast program has become an opportunity to talk to parents about reading with their child.

- **Schools explain to parents what the expectations for students and parents are.** These schools recognize the varying perceptions their families may have of school and education, especially if the parents are immigrants or have not had good experiences in schools. They understand that parents may need to be educated about the role school expects them to take, as well as their rights as parents in the school system. Learning fairs, education summits, and back-to-school nights at Atkinson, Warm Springs, and Roosevelt explain benchmarks, graduation requirements, and how to navigate the school bureaucracy.
- **Each family's experience, history, language, and culture are honored.** This may be done by inviting them to offer their stories as a learning experience to their children, as in Doni's class. Language classes, oral history projects, after-school clubs, and culturally responsive family fun nights embrace families' cultures and foster inclusiveness at Cherry Valley. Back-to-school barbecues at Warm Springs give new teachers an opportunity to get to know the community in which they will be teaching. Their attendance at the barbecue is appreciated by families who want teachers to see where and how they live. The welcoming environments, especially in the school lobby area at Atkinson and Cherry Valley, send the message that each family is valued.
- **Parents are encouraged to be meaningfully involved in the classroom.** When parents are able to be involved in the classroom, educators like Doni and Peterson recognize that the most important effect of their presence is on the pride, self-confidence, and engagement that students feel seeing their parents involved.
- **Parents are not solely asked to support the school's wishes or needs, but are supported in developing their own goals and initiating their own ideas.** At these schools, teachers do not just tell parents what to do to support them, but engage parents in conversation about how they can work together to support children. Parents' ideas and concerns are taken seriously and addressed immediately. Forums at Atkinson and Warm Springs asked parents what their needs were. At Cherry Valley, parents were encouraged to develop events such as the Native American family fun night.
- **Children are viewed holistically and their social and economic needs are addressed.** The Polson Partnership Project offers a number of components to increase families' and teachers' skills, and provide other social services. At Roosevelt, staff work to find college scholarships for students. At Whitaker, Vega-Kreuzer educated herself about social and educational services available to families and helped to link families to those needed services.

Families want the best for their children. The parents and caretakers we interviewed generally focus on what they can do at home to support their children's schoolwork, and relate their aspirations for them. For many of the parents, family involvement does not necessarily mean active participation in school-based events, though many parents saw the value of school-based activities. Parents want information on their child's progress and on how to support their child's education at home. They also want to feel respected and know that going to the school does not mean that they "have to be someone else."

Effective school–family–community partnerships lead to improved student success. In these schools partnerships are founded on an ethic of, in Atkinson principal Deborah Peterson's words, "building relationships with families throughout the year." It is these personal relationships between educators and families that encourage shared understanding of children's educational needs. Relationships that foster respect and inclusiveness, that support families and educators as they work to help children and youth succeed, are the daily practices of family involvement that could be part of every school.

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Resources

Resources and Research

Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships
www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/center.htm

The Harvard Family Research Project
http://gseweb.harvard.edu/~hfrp/index.html

National Center for Family & Community Connections With Schools
www.sedl.org/connections/welcome.html

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Pathways to School Improvement: Family and Community
North Central Regional Educational Laboratory
www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/pa0cont.htm

The San Diego County Office of Education: Family Involvement Page
www.sdcoe.k12.ca.us/iss/family/

Practices and Examples

Community Builders: Teens Turning Places Around
www.pps.org/tcb/highlights.htm

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Family Involvement Network of Educators
http://gseweb.harvard.edu/~hfrp/projects/fine/announcements/02nov.html

The Partnership page
www.ed.gov/offices/OIIA/pfie/

What Kids Can Do
www.whatkidscando.org/home.html

Community Involvement

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Public Education Network
www.publiceducation.org

Diversity and Partnerships

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Resources in Spanish

Recursos en español de "National PTA"
www.pta.org/parentinvolvement/spanish/index.asp

Recursos en español
www.ed.gov/offices/OIIA/spanishresources/

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